

Testimony on House Bill 6897, An Act concerning application of pesticides at state operated parks, athletic fields, and playgrounds.

Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, and esteemed ranking members,

Thank you for the privilege of testifying on this worthwhile bill.

I first want to acknowledge that for the layperson, it may be challenging to ask just what is amiss here. Aren't pesticides tested, found to be harmless to us and our families and pets? The answer is no, and the reason is that democracy is government by persuasion, and the responsible industries are large and powerful. Our government agencies continue to be headed by former executives of these very industries. They submit their own test data and this is blindly accepted, and these products are heavily marketed, and many modern landscapers and service providers are schooled in industry sponsored curriculums. For them, pesticide application is a profit sector. Because this national oversight has been compromised, it has fallen, or risen, to individual states to exercise vigilance.

Meanwhile, we are seeing more pesticide use than ever, and fungi, molds, insects and other predators of grass are always trying to evolve to be able to pick the lock of natural defenses. As with germs and antibiotics, this forces us to increase concentrations, so by necessity, the glyphosate we use today is more powerful than just a few years ago. The pesticides of tomorrow will be more concentrated and powerful than those of today.

We are seeing more of our young people with problems associated with pesticides, including birth defects, developmental delays, neurotoxicity, behavioral disorders and lymphoma. Pesticides also degrade soil and contaminate groundwater. Public health professionals, our scientists, farmers, and educators are concerned.

There are alternatives to pesticides, many of which are old school knowledge based. One concept is to manually remove unwanted weeds. Another is to strengthen soils by adding compost or natural fertilizers to help soils to grow the beneficial grasses to give a lush and playable turf.

We need to decrease and minimize our exposure to things that are problematic. So says the World Health Organization last February, predicting a sixty plus percent projected increase of cancers in the next twenty years in North America alone.

There are interests here in Hartford who gladly accept industry compensation, and they'll tell you that our concerns are overstated, that pesticides are safe. Please don't fall for this.

It is appropriate that our state agencies succeed without pesticides and the public exposure that happens. This will be a powerful and appropriate example.

Thank you for your consideration.